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Do we not all have an inner life of the mind, for which we are forever yearning amid our toils, and in which we would spend all our time, did not the iron necessities of the outer call us in another direction? The curse of the literary profession is that, requiring no special preliminary training and no capital for its pursuit,—only a few quires of paper, a steel pen, and a bottle of ink,—it is recruited by all the vagrant talent of the world, and is consequently overstocked. When there is not enough employment for all, some must starve. An overstocked profession has been compared to a crew trying to save themselves by a raft scarcely large enough to carry half of them; and, again, to the inmates of the Black Hole at Calcutta, where all who could not get near the aperture in the wall were suffocated.

As to those great works which make epochs in a nation's life, and which have to wait long and weary years for appreciators, is not the same hardship the lot of all other professions as well as of literature? Does not the same thing occur in art, in science, in regard to mechanical inventions, and even, many times, in practical enterprises? How can the value of such phenomenal literary works be appreciated in dollars or doubloons? They are inestimable, and the remuneration for writing them, if remuneration be desired, must be sought, like that for the discovery of gravitation or the invention of aesthetics, in the esteem and gratitude of mankind, and in the consciousness of having conferred an inestimable benefit upon one's fellow-beings.

Finally, we remark that the best literary work in all ages and countries, the weightiest as well as the most brilliant writing, has been done by men who were not what Byron satirizes as "fellows in foolscap uniform, turned up with ink"—that is, authors by profession; a fact which shows that literature has no need of public support. The great writers of Greece and Rome, of Italy and France, of England in the reigns of Elizabeth, the Charleses, Queen Anne, and the Georges, as we could show by hundreds of names that crowd to the point of our pen, were not generally literary men, as we now understand the term, but men of action, trained in business. Such writers have one great advantage over those who write for a living. Not only are their minds at ease, undistracted by any alien anxiety regarding rent, fire, clothing, and food, but the hours thus rescued from their callings, and looked forward to as an escape from money-scales and stocks, from horsehair and bombazine or drugs,—in short, as a change and a recreation,—become inexpressibly delightful; and they, consequently, lose no time in dawdling, but plunge at once into work and make every blow tell. Gifford, the old Quarterly Reviewer, who had had a vivid experience of the pangs and drudgery of writing for a living, once observed—and Coleridge has expressed the sentiment no less strongly—that "a single hour of composition won from the business of the day is worth more than the whole day's toil of him who works at the trade of literature: in the one case the spirit comes joyfully to refresh itself, like a hart to the water-brooks; in the other it pursues its miserable way, panting and jaded, with the dogs and hunger of necessity behind."

WILLIAM MATHEWS.

THE COST OF CONTESTED ELECTIONS.

A MOST valuable commentary upon Speaker Reed's able article in *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* for last July, upon the subject of "Contested Elections," is furnished by the recent statement that the cost of the election contests in the House of Representatives of the Fifty-first Congress would

probably exceed \$100,000. Under the law \$2,000 is allowed to each member and contestant to defray the expenses of a contest or of defending the right to a seat; but more and more it is evident that this sum comes far short of covering the legitimate expenses incurred. By special appropriations Congress has often added to the amount allotted by law, until at last it is apparent that the cost of determining whether certain men or certain other men are entitled to occupy seats in the House of Representatives is becoming appalling.

In the article referred to, Mr. Reed pointed out that in the "somewhat celebrated case" of Governor Curtin and Mr. Yocum each party to the contest received \$8,000, "and that sum did not pay their expenses within thousands of dollars." That was in the Forty-sixth Congress, during which the sum total paid to contestants and "contestees" was not less than \$59,567. In the next Congress a still larger amount was expended for this purpose—\$71,285, twenty-four men receiving the sum allowed by law and two members \$3,500 apiece. The Speaker proceeded to show that during the last eight Congresses (not counting the present one) \$318,000 has been paid for contests in the House, making an average of about \$40,000 in each Congress.

The Congress which is about to expire will easily break the record if it turns out that the cost of its election contests exceeds \$100,000, as seems likely at the present writing to be the case.

Commenting upon the large figures with which he had been dealing, Speaker Reed said significantly: "Large as is this expenditure, it is not large enough in reality, *if the present system is to be maintained* [the italics are mine]; for the restriction to \$2,000 is very hard upon contestants of limited means. If they enter upon a contest, especially in the midst of unfriendly officials, as is the case in some districts, no one can tell where the expense may end. In fact, it may be doubted if the restriction was not suggested and put on with that view, though it is very certain that the Congress which passed the law did not appreciate what it was doing."

The question why the public treasury should bear any of the expenses of election contests which concern only certain individuals naturally arises; and on that point Mr. Reed had a luminous and convincing word to say. "It is precisely because it so much concerns the people to determine who is to rightly represent them that even money becomes of no consequence." "So much, indeed, is the public concerned that it has always been deemed worth while to pay the expenses of both sides so that the truth may be brought out. If, then, we are to pay at all, we must pay all its costs. *And if it costs too much, we ought to devise some plan to lessen the cost.*"

A sounder proposition was never stated in words. That it does cost too much cannot be doubted by any intelligent observer. Not only is the money cost great, but a large share of the time of the House is consumed over election contests. Speaker Reed's contention in the article from which these extracts have been made* was that the proper tribunals for the disposition of election contests are the courts of the United States. The argument in favor of that policy is quite unanswerable. Great Britain adopted it more than twenty years ago, and there has never been a serious suggestion that a return to the old system would be advisable. The case was strongly put in a special message sent to the New York Legislature nearly a year ago by

* NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, vol. 151, pp. 115, 116.

Governor Hill. There was some partisan denunciation of Mr. Hill for his "new departure," but no answer was offered to his main proposition that contested-election cases should go before the courts for adjudication and settlement. The subject is now before the New York Legislature in the form of a concurrent resolution proposing an amendment to the constitution whereby "the Legislature may provide by law for judicial proceedings in the courts of the State to determine questions relating to contested seats in either house, and that judgment in such a proceeding shall be conclusive as to the election and qualifications of the person in whose favor it is rendered."

Under the present method it is almost inevitable that contested cases are decided more from partisan considerations than strictly according to the evidence. It is true that one of the contests in the present House of Representatives was decided in favor of the Democrat who held the seat that was contested; but a single case does not prove that the Committee on Elections was a non-partisan body. Where one party has only a narrow majority, it is only human nature for it to attempt to increase that majority if a reasonable pretext for doing so can be found in contested elections. Public confidence in the fairness and impartiality of our courts has never been shaken, and no one can doubt that in their hands contested-election cases would be decided with substantial justice, and with as little reference as possible to partisan concerns.

However, my main point is the necessity of putting an end to the heavy bills of expenses which are piling themselves up in connection with cases of this character. If the total has reached \$100,000 now, who knows that it may not soon reach \$200,000? "*If it costs too much, we ought to devise some plan to lessen the cost.*" It does cost too much, and the machinery for lessening the cost is ready to hand. The subject is one that demands early and the most serious consideration from Congress. Speaker Reed will be in the minority after March 4. He can scarcely do his country a greater service than by agitating this question and bringing about, if possible, a reform in the present costly, cumbrous, unsatisfactory, and partisan method of dealing with election contests in the House of Representatives.

JULIAN PROCTOR.

IS OUR NATION DEFENCELESS?

IF THE people of the United States were to be divided according to their ideas concerning public defence, they might be generally grouped into four classes, thus: (1) those who never think about it; (2) those who dismiss it with a notion that the country never need have another war; (3) those who think that the United States can fight the world at a day's notice; (4) those who see how utterly unprepared we are. Three of these classes are living in a fool's paradise, in spite of the repeated warnings of soldiers, who, while they are in no sense alarmists, are still alarmed at the apathy and hostility with which their prudent counsels have been treated. A glimmer of the truth regarding the navy seems growing to a light, and, although the Pacific coast is entirely neglected, a few inadequate appropriations have been made for the defence of a small part of the Atlantic seaboard, and provision has been made for a few modern guns.

But the land forces, the men who should always be in training, the army and militia, are practically neglected. The army is wretchedly small; the